

New Measures to Help Avoid Future Abrupt Groundings, Improve Air Travel

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters Announces New Aviation Measures to Avoid Groundings, Strengthen Passenger Protections, Improve Choice and Reduce Congestion

The Secretary announced airlines, aircraft manufacturers and the federal government should review current procedures to avoid the kind of massive flight cancellations that left hundreds of thousands of passengers stranded this April. She called on the FAA and airlines to:

- Better ensure mutual understanding of what constitutes compliance with an Airworthiness Directive,
- Review and improve procedures for requesting and approving alternative solutions for safety directives, known as Alternate Means of Compliance (AMOC), and
- Review existing protocols to make sure that significant safety decisions are made using a clearly documented process.
- The Secretary said she would send the two reports to the Independent Review Team she established last month to include any findings or recommendations in their comprehensive report due later this year.

The Secretary also announced new measures to help consumers by giving them more complete information about airline tarmac delays and new checked baggage fees.

- The Department is issuing a new rule requiring airlines to provide complete on-time and tarmac delay data about flights that may depart from a gate more than once, flights that are cancelled after having left the gate, and flights that are diverted to another airport after departure.
- The Department is also issuing new guidelines specifying that carriers and travel agents must disclose baggage fees in their internet and print ads before anyone purchases a ticket. The guidelines also make clear that airlines may not impose increased fees after a passenger has bought a ticket.

The Secretary also announced three new measures to help cut delays, improve service and reduce fare in the New York region.

- The Department today posted its final order to **temporarily cap flights at Newark Liberty Airport** at an average of 83 scheduled flights per hour from June 1-Oct. 2009. The measure will spread schedules more evenly throughout the day and allow for 30 additional operations per day over last summer.
- The Department will also invest **\$2 million for a new study on adding transit connections to New York's Stewart Airport**, 90 miles north of Manhattan, in an effort to help take pressure off the region's busier airports.
- The Department also announced a rulemaking to make a limited number of take off and landing opportunities, known as slots, available for auction to **add competition at JFK and Newark airports**. Under the proposal, all airlines operating at Newark and JFK would be given up to 20 slots a day for the 10-year life of the rule.
 - For JFK, the proposal offers two options. Under the first, 10 percent of the airlines' slots above the 20-slot baseline would be made available via an auction. The revenue from the auctions would then be invested in congestion and capacity

improvements in the region. Under the second option for JFK, the airlines would auction 20 percent of slots above the baseline and keep all the proceeds. Depending on the option, between 91 and 179 slots would be affected out of 1,245 total slots at the airport.

- **For Newark,** the proposal calls for auctioning 10 percent of slots above the baseline annually for the first five years of the rule. As a result, only 96 slots out of a total of 1,219 slots at the airport would be auctioned over the 10-year span of the proposal.

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